FISH CHEEKS

I fell in love when I was 14. He was the minister’s son. The boy was not Chinese. The boy I was in love with was named Robert. His father was a minister.

It was Christmas Eve, and I cried. I was embarrassed. We were having the minister and his family to our house. I did not know how they would feel about my family. We ate Chinese food not turkey. We were loud and noisy.

Mother was cooking shrimp. She was cooking fish. She had mushrooms in a bowl of water. She had a plate of squid which looked like bike tires.

The minister and his family came to my house. They rang the bell. I saw Robert. He did not say “hi.”

I became sad and upset. Robert did not like the food my mother made. Father poked the meat of the fish near the eye. He said, “Amy, this is your favorite part.” I felt embarrassed.

At the end of the meal, my dad burped. He told them it was Chinese custom to burp after your meal. The minister tried to burp. He was trying to show respect.

Mother spoke to me. She told me that even though I wanted to be an American girl, I was Chinese. She told me to be proud. It was ok to be different.

It was not until many years later that I understood what my mother was telling me. All the foods that Christmas Eve were all my favorite foods. My mother had tried to make the dinner very special for me.